

contribution to a new phase of writing on Scottish history but is also a nicely-argued Scottish perspective on British history.

Donald J. Withrington
University of Aberdeen

The Scottish Episcopal Church A New History. By Gavin White. Edinburgh: General Synod of the Scottish Episcopal Church, 1998. Pp. vi + 153. £8.00. ISBN 0 905573 60 9.

This short and bracing book is to be welcomed as the first general history of the Scottish Episcopal Church since Frederick Goldie's *Short History* appeared in 1951. Comparable in length, its thematic approach to the period 1750-1950 contrasts with the narrative structure of Goldie's succinct coverage of the church's development from the Reformation to the post-war church.

In nineteen short chapters covering themes such as the Oxford movement and social services, as well as the church in Glasgow and Edinburgh, White offers a tour of Episcopalian history that is never less than interesting, is often exciting, and at times even outrageous. Readers may be in danger of laughing aloud while reading ecclesiastical history. Partly originating in research for a history of St. Mary's Cathedral, Glasgow, the book reads as a set of inter-related essays more than a fully developed chronological or analytical history. Indeed some chapters are reworked from previous articles in *RSCHS* and elsewhere, such as the opening account of Hutchinsonianism in the eighteenth-century church, which may surprise the reader expecting a gentle introduction to the church's post-Culloden travails. Nonetheless it introduces us persuasively to a facet of the Episcopalian mindset, the quality of "givenness" underpinning the ordering of the church under episcopal authority.

White tackles many of the key themes for his chosen period, but deliberately avoids a wholly chronological approach, so that readers unfamiliar with the historical outline will still rely on Goldie and other writers for guidance on points of fact. In this respect and in his descriptive powers he resembles Marion Lochhead with her nineteenth-century snapshots. However, his longer perspective allows him to confront the church's period of decline in the mid-twentieth century, and he is altogether less respectful of the social and ecclesiastical *status quo*, or of venerated figures such as A.P. Forbes. One of his recurrent themes is the dominance of the church from the mid-nineteenth century by middle and upper class clergy who imported

the attitudes of an Anglican elite, with their desire to act for the unthreatening poor and their fear of the working class. He is engagingly sceptical about matters such as the status of bishops as leaders during the past century (another aspect of "givennesse"), and implicitly questions how far their claims should be held to be essential to church government.

Likewise, he takes an ironic look at the church's relationships with Anglicans and Roman Catholics, and how they have affected ecumenism. For relations with the Church of Scotland he takes his cue from a delightful description of the Episcopal Church as a small dog barking at a mastiff. But at what point did the Kirk cease to feel uncomfortable with bishops in the Church of England? The development of lay participation in the church's affairs is briefly examined, and he is particularly interesting on the church's institutions, such as the bizarre double legislature which existed for several years in order to accommodate lay rights. A tactful account of the turbulent introduction of ordination of women priests brings his history up to date.

The heavy reliance on church periodical publications is, in the sparse Episcopalian historiography, a welcome novelty, and it yields rich contemporary source material. However, it also ensures that we see some of the church's history through the prism of the later period, resulting in sketchy accounts of the congregations of the eighteenth century. As so much of what happened after 1745 had its roots earlier it is unfortunate that the accounts of, for example, the rise of liturgical worship, the emergence of qualified congregations or the origins of the clergy charity fund are insubstantial or erroneous. To an extent this reflects the limited publications in the field, but recent work on the pre-1750 period and on later figures such as Bishop John Skinner might have been consulted.

White has listened attentively to the variety of opinions expressed in print, but it remains unclear how far they were representative. Another difficulty arises because the distinction between the voices of the source material and of the author is not always clear, perhaps deliberately so, although we cannot attribute all the naughty ideas to long-gone rectors, vestrymen and church workers. Some opinions in a fuller work might have been balanced by other considerations. As the tailpiece to a fascinating account of the ironies surrounding Bishop Seabury's consecration, do we accept the author's harsh dismissal of the architecture of St Andrew's Cathedral, Aberdeen, without hearing John Betjeman's sensitive description of it in 1947 as Aberdeen's "best

modern building", achieved by J.N. Comper's "superb renovation of the interior"?

Throughout the author delivers telling thumbnail sketches, and provides fascinating and useful glimpses of many aspects of Episcopalian history, such as the houses of mercy founded in the last century for fallen women, the rise and fall of Episcopalian schools and the training of their teachers, and the development of church music (though curiously missing the Tractarians' influence). In examining the end of the church's historiographical tradition, he asks if this is because the Episcopalian heartland of the north-east is now just a memory, by which of course he means scarcely even that. This is typical of his facility for turning ideas and accepted wisdom on their head, a quality which will perhaps stimulate others into proving or disproving his arguments. This is a well-written and very worthwhile book, but it bears the scars of its production. There are numerous typographical infelicities, especially in the notes, some of which are missing altogether, and there is no index. Readers may forgive these sins in a modestly-priced in-house church publication.

A constant theme is the unwillingness of the Episcopal Church, no doubt like others, to perceive and accept the nature of change, particularly its decline since its numerical apogee in the 1930s. Many of White's chapters demonstrate his conclusion that the church's institutions such as its legislative bodies and theological training had served the purpose for which they were created, and that change was necessary. Like a retrospective seer, the historian describes this process, but it is not necessarily his task to provide the answers.

Tristram Clarke
National Archives of Scotland

Studies in Scottish Church History. By A.C. Cheyne. Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1999. Pp. ix + 325. ISBN 0 567 08644 5.

In this interesting and valuable collection Professor Cheyne republishes ten of his papers (in revised form) and adds three new ones. The focus of the papers is almost entirely Presbyterian. At certain points there is some treatment of Episcopalian figures and thought, but hardly any of Roman Catholic or non-Presbyterian Dissenting. The time-span as a whole is from the Reformation to the present day, but all except three of the papers are concerned only with nineteenth- and twentieth-century subjects. Most of the contributions are either broadly thematic in nature or deal with personalities in relation to theological

